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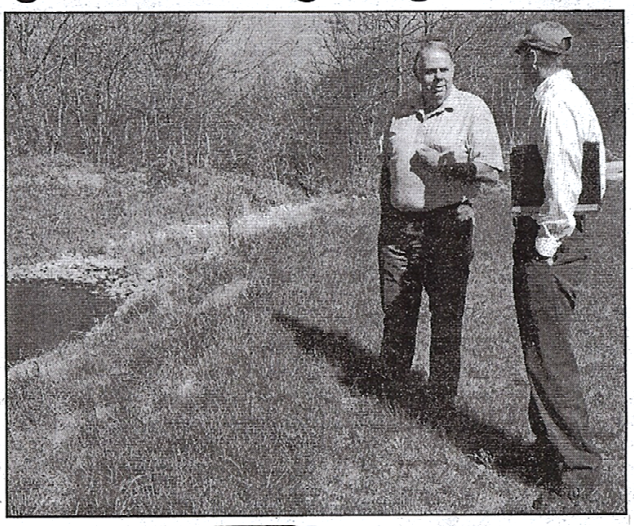
Uxbridge DPW earns recognition for going the extra mile

Lawrence Bombara, Superintendent of the Uxbridge Department of Public Works (DPW) understands how storm water runoff is a serious threat to lakes and rivers and ensures that his crew goes the extra mile to protect the Blackstone River, which flows through town and directly past the DPW facility. The Blackstone River Coalition (BRC) recently recognized this group as being "In Business for the Blackstone" and thanked Bombara for the efforts to minimize the risk of pollutants collected in stormwater runoff.

Stormwater runoff, or rain water or snow melt that can not be absorbed into the ground, is a leading source of degraded water quality in rivers, lakes, and estuaries. As water travels across impervious or non-porous surfaces such as rooftops, roads and parking lots, it collects a toxic mix of chemicals, oil, grease, metals, litter, and debris. The runoff is directed to the nearest stormdrain or catch basin and then discharged directly into the nearest waterway.

Giant piles of salt and sand. Heavy duty maintenance equipment. Vehicle repair bays. All are typical features of a DPW facility. All are potentially significant sources of pollution when rain water and snow melt flow across the



Town of Uxbridge DPW Superintendent Larry Bombara (left) discusses the importance of detention pond maintenance with Peter Coffin, Secretary of the Blackstone River Coalition.

deposits the snow on the DPW's parking lot, where the melt is directed over a vegetated area before it drains to the river. This provides another opportunity to replenish the water table and filter pollutants before the runoff enters the River.

Bombara emphasized the need for Uxbridge and other towns to strengthen their stormwater management practices, since an increase in developed areas leads to an increase in runoff, water pollution levels, and urban flooding. He also expressed gratitude for the assistance provided by volunteers from the local Faith Fellowship Church who organize cleanups and "do not dump" stormdrain stenciling events across town.

BRC's In Business for the Blackstone educates small and mid-size companies and organizations in the watershed on the detriments of contaminant's in stormwater runoff and encourages the adoption of easy-to-implement good housekeeping practices that can prevent pollutants from being collected in rain or snowmelt that runs across paved surfaces and into catch basins that discharge into the nearest waterway. The program provides outreach materials, technical assistance, and public recognition to those interested in being better stewards to help make the Blackstone River "Clean by 2015." For more information, contact Dona Neely donaneely@zaptheblackstone.org.

area. But not in Uxbridge! The asphalt on this DPW lot is pitched to direct runoff to a "riprap" course of randomly placed rocks that slow the flow and gives the water a chance to be absorbed back into the water table or filtered before flowing into the river. The runoff is then directed to a detention pond, which provides another opportunity for pollutants to settle out before the water enters the adjacent Blackstone River. Bombara and his crew have also upgraded three critical drains to include pollution prevention devices, such as hoods and oil and gas separators, that clean the stormwater before it is discharged.

The extra efforts don't stop at the DPW facility. The department applies the same type of precautions when working on the town's roadways. Streets sweeping is done more frequently to minimize the risk of sand, debris, litter, and oils collecting in catch basins and being spewed into the river. Additionally, resurfacing projects include basin upgrades that include deeper sumps and hoods that prevent debris from passing through the outflow pipe. These activities also protect the town from flooding episodes and costly clean ups.

The Uxbridge DPW has also eliminated the practice of dumping snow removed from streets into the river. This common procedure is detrimental to water bodies, as plowed snow includes sand and salt used to treat roads and other contaminant's associated with vehicle traffic. The DPW now

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